

AN·ODE·TO·HARVARD AND·OTHER·POEMS

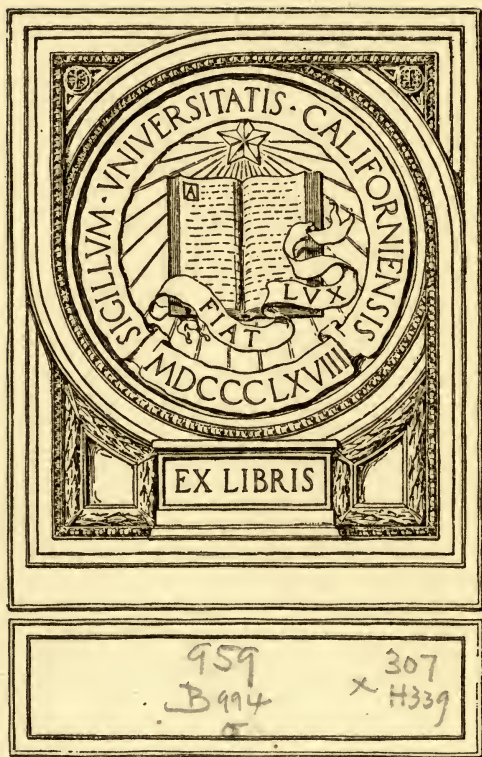
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WITTER BYNNER





AN ODE TO HARVARD

AND OTHER POEMS

By
WITTER BYNNER



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ANNEX 1110

To A. B. W.
and W. L. W.

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AN ODE TO HARVARD



AN ODE TO HARVARD

I was with Thee, Alma Mater,
From that formal first October
To that fourth and final June;
Bed by twelve o'clock or later,
Out again at least by noon;
Gay at times, but often sober:
O that dignified October!—
O that muslin mischief June!
I who loved Thee, Alma Mater,
Had to leave Thee all too soon!

Though, many an hour, a ring of castles rises,
And none in Spain are cosey like to these
That look through elms and move through
 memories
With turns, with turrets and with old surprises,—
Yet are they vanished on the instant breeze.

But here I am come back, back to the
 Yard,—with no such flippant tread
As when I lived in it, but like another Freshman,
 with as grave a mien,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

As close a survey of its hedge of bricks,
As though I'd never seen
Holworthy, Hollis, Massachusetts and the
rest,
And Stoughton, which I look at longest and like
best:
I feel a sudden, a funereal pain,
A sense of an own parent come to view
The former haunts of an own son that's dead. . . .
A lump was in my throat, until I said:
'You sentimental fool,
It's where you went to school,
That's all!—
You can come back at any time and find a
goody-made-up bed
If not in Stoughton, in some other hall
Where now as proctors linger fellows whom you
knew
When proctors seemed impressive things to
them and you:—
Or visit younger friends, some one perhaps still
new
To the immemorial methods of Memorial
cooks!—
That made me smile again,—visions of chicken
giblet-dressed,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And as constant lamb as Mary's till petitions
gave us rest

And sounds of service like a heavy rain.—*

O how the good discomforts all,
The little miseries, come back and make me gay
again!

The melancholy was a mood that fell but to
make greener the great joy that stays.

See how the buildings are the same as in those
other days!—

Still the gray squirrels play their jerky tricks
Near Gray's;

And there the Library peeps through,
Dear Gothic spinster garrulous with books;
How well she keeps her looks!—

And here lived two of the best men I knew;
And there—but O no, no, I try in vain!—
No, Harvard College, no!—it isn't you!

Ah well, I've got my bearings now,
And as a ghost—as in a gentle classic hell—
I take my way amongst the shades

* I meant to make this epigram,
But I forgot,—
That Mary had a little lamb:—
We had a lot!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

With a remote and graduated sense of peace,
And roam the nether-glades
Under the elms of Stygian bough—
(That isn't right but near enough to do!)

There goes the bell,
Calling its monotone in Harvard Hall,—
And out they come from many a door,
Across, or by the long diagonal paths from end
to end
Of the old Yard.

So looked they all
Of yore,
Before decease!—
That walk, that swing, and there that careful
crease
Of trouser-leg, those tennis rackets, and those
crazy hats,—all, all the old-time traces. . . .

But let the good bell cease!
Old Jones still rings a knell of dreams, just as
he did before:
My Harvard College, no!—it isn't you!
It's hard
And yet it's true,—
When all things else are right, that the faces

AN ODE TO HARVARD

All are new!
So looked they not of yore,
Before decease!
This is no gentle classic hell!—
Be still, old bell!—

Yet this is Harvard College, here and now!

Tempus fugit like a streak,—
But it must be and so be it!
Why, it hardly seems a week
Since the time, so to speak,
When I belonged here, was a loafer, had a
hold.—
But the times that now are new
In a twinkling shall be old,—
Pretty soon these fellows too
Will come back to see their college and shan't
see it.

So I'll think but kindly of them, as they'll
doubtless think of me,
And I'll see who's living where I lived, I'll
knock at Stoughton 3.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And there's the old door open—Lord, how we
used to bang it!

And there's the fireplace again, and the shutters
—but I say,

It looks so different papered green!—I liked it
better gray!

And then he tells me it was brown before his
day.

He has a fine Da Vinci there, but that's not
where I'd hang it!

Is he a grind?—Perhaps so. But he's pretty
nice today,—

With his Morris chair, and a cigarette, and a
hearty hand to stay . . .

So there's the door inside again—but the horns
are gone above it.

3 Stoughton!—it's the same old room! Lord,
how I used to love it!

But it looks so clean and empty now with that
ugly desk of oak

And so orderly to work in! I'll close my eyes
a minute,

And I'll fill it full of truck again—for it had
the whole world in it!

I lived here all four years, you know, and every-
thing my way.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

How thick it was with sacred dust, with
 friendliness, and smoke,
With Meredith and Poe and other powers,
With signs of Mrs. Row, and with the hours
Of midnight talk, heady as wine!
'A fountain and a shrine'
Was Stoughton 3,
'All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,'
And all belonged to me!— . . .

Hang it!
He must have thought me dull!—I hardly
 spoke.
I had all ready for him, to have made his cour-
 tesy worth while,
A recent New York joke,—
But I thought, the more I sat there, that I'd
 better not begin it—
My voice was getting queer; and I could only
 say,
'Good-bye' and 'thanks,' and smile—
And there's the old door shut again.—Lord,
 how we used to bang it!

There were other rooms I liked almost as well,
But I'll go no more a-venturing inside;

AN ODE TO HARVARD

I'll rather keep them in my mind
As then they were,—
Those self-same dens of fellowship and hearty
 habitation,
Those windows shining in the night
With special beckonings of light,
Those fires comforting our feet
While we'd discuss the universe, a waitress,
 and the nation,
And set aside ideas of God with cosey, sad
 negation;
I'll rather see what still is here
Than what must change from year to year.

O I remember now!—whom should I meet
But the former Dean,
This morning near the Square,
Who used to hold the pedals for our unac-
 customed feet,
And start the wheel of living with his lubricating
 air!
It was good to see him bow again his loose and
 kindly bow,
And smile again his *Mona Lisa* smile.—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

But there seems to be another look, till now
I hadn't seen,
An elusive look of sadness, as he finds the world
worth while.

I'd like to meet the others,—
That dear old man and slow
Who made good English young and quick, and
taught me half I know:
(Love for Wordsworth he imparted
Until I, who'd scoffed at first
At the simple-minded worst,
Brought devotion to the best and simple-
hearted);
Or the Scot who knew his Scriptures A to Z
And the secret thoughts of Bacon and the art
of making tea,
And who once, when I had studied through the
night to take his test,
Left his class-room to arouse me from a deep
untimely rest;
Or the twirler of his watch-chain, who, with
furrows in his brow,
Likened failings in a work of mine, that emu-
lated Dante,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

To a discommoding peak upon the rear of
the *Bacchante*!—
Or professors whom I barely even saw when I
was here,
Yet whom none the less I claim in my estate,
as I revere
Unseen regions of my country that are none the
less my pride;
Or the far-collected brothers
Whom Philosophy allied,—
One whose mind digested all things, while his
stomach never tried,
Or the Spanish poet-philosopher whose eye would
so beguile
That you'd see no more his meaning, but the
flaring altar-oil
That was burning as for worshippers inside;
And the President who knew his mind with sure
but courtly vim,
And who'd very gladly greet you, if you thought
of greeting him,—
Or that brilliant, melancholy man
Who, in the last course he began,
Spoke through the window from his book,
Or into space,—
But never at his hearers would he look,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Until one day he turned in sadness to us face to
face

It seemed another man, another place,
And said that he was sick, must go away, the
course must end!—

I know not where is he,
He scarcely thought of me,—
And yet he strangely seems to be
A friend.

While I was here, when still I might have met
And known a white-haired man whom all men
loved,

Fool that I was, I never even tried.

But now on coming back, when he has died,
I find his welcome waiting till my spirit should be
moved

To look for it,—I learn at last

That signal, from the past,

Of his bluff-saluting cane,

That welcome which the fellows re-create

To share with me who look for it so late.

It is as though I too had stood beside, and closed
behind

With all those others, as he passed

AN ODE TO HARVARD

In silence through the Yard, to take his leave.
They tell me that the Chapel saw that day,
Faces of hardest clay
Illumined with a manliness
Of tears, because the guide had reached his
 journeys' end.
But a love that any one man could achieve
Among so many mates of human kind,
By a just knowledge that the ancient sun
Still shines on animal and saint in one,
By deep democracy of gentleness
To all his boys both young and old—
This was not death, but life an hundred-fold,
A life that widening on from unknown friend to
 friend
In deeper influence than memory,
Establishes itself immortally.

Lo, I behold another of the pedagogic faces,—
(O, but it's good to see them and to know that
 they are here!—)
I see the little man from Maine
Go marching to his room again!—
Back from the letter-box he takes his independent
 paces,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Like a wily spinster spider
Who prefers her brittle legs, with the web of
 wit inside her
And the vision in her eyes
Of her cunning little parlour full of panic-
 stricken flies.

 It used to be in Stoughton, but he weaves
 in Hollis now;
And the sacred number seven
Is profanely now fifteen: but he calls upstairs
 a gain,
For there's no one now above him but inhabi-
 tants of heaven
And the angels wear goloshes when they riot in
 the rain.

 And how this takes me through the years
 to Stoughton 3 again!—
He was proctor there, my proctor;
And he often felt the pain
Of the pleasure that it gave him when he'd
 cleverly complain,
That it wasn't quite as quiet as the 'waters
 stilled at even'!
He sent his own *Chartreuse* one night, if we
 would drink less loudly;
And we revered him proudly,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Though we'd only just begun:—
But the Lord is now my Proctor,
And it isn't half the fun.

(I can hear my Proctor bidding me a little to
 forbear,
A moment from the mirth of moody memory to
 spare.
So I'll slip beneath His door,
When it's darker in His hall,
An apology and prayer.)

See how the elms hold conference in air;
I fancy by a breath from tree to tree
One of them asks his fellows, noting me,—
'Is he a stranger that is sitting there?'
And then the nearest one to Stoughton 3
Says,—'Not at all, look closer, don't you see
His crazy hair?'—
Even in fancy it is comforting
To be remembered; therefore my gratitude I
 bring
To you, O Harvard Elms, that stand and drink
 together
In a reverend elation!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

How many times we'd watch the weather
Sparkle in your branches, that were lifting the
libation,
Whether your cups with snow were frozen
deep,
While we went slanting, muffled, in the chill,
Or whether raindrops were their winking fill,
Or else in time of laughter after rain,
When we could sit upon the steps again!

Here the burning noon would venture with a
step of revery;
And the evening stole amongst you with a
dreamy meditation,
Or we'd watch the night his vigil keep
Or the silent blue-eyed morrow wander, walk-
ing in her sleep,
Under your boughs amongst the stolid halls.

And the singing nidulation
Of the birdies in the Spring,
With the thought how close an egg can hide
a feather!—
And the sun that falls
On everything
And breaks the frosty tether,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

When the Glee Club and the others in melodic
conclamation

Get together,—

When there's general jubilation

And a mating inclination

And a fellow thinks of who the *One* shall
be!—

That's when I went to Waverley,

With inward divination,

And made her late to dinner with my plea.

And now I'm thanking heaven

That it stopped just where it did,

When she wept at half past seven

And I went away and hid!

And the thought of what my boldness

Might have brought about is fearful,

When in kindness she was tearful

But rejected me in coldness,

For I've heard of her conversion to the cause
of Christian Science,

The denial of all evil,

And she's heard of my alliance

With the forces of the devil.

It was just at half past seven

That I made my tender bid,—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

How we both are thanking heaven
That it stopped just where it did!

But I came from out my hiding,
And I got a crowd together,
And at *Marliave's* we soon were flocking, birds
of a fine feather.

Madame was there presiding,
With her ear-rings and gray gown,
And that oneness of her stomach, hips and
little twinkling frown.

She would go abroad each summer, so they said,
And would tour from town to town,
As a lady of the fashion, in yellow or in brown,
And then come back in winter to her slightly
greasy gown,

Her gray presiding gown,
Greet the comers, pour the cordials, make cor-
rections in your French. . . .

But the last time that I went there, and was
better served and fed,
Though I really knew it wasn't, yet the place
seemed running down;
For I still would turn my head—
But she's dead,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Madame is dead!—

And there's some one else instead,

Where I saw but vibrant visions of the ear-
rings and the gown

With the chuckle of her French

And the twinkle of her frown.

O, I tell you it's a wrench—

She has gone abroad forever

To be lady of the fashion in a far too foreign
town,—

But, bless her heart, I'll never

Forget the old gray gown!—

How she greeted us that night

With her separate and bright

Salutation!

How she watched the semination

Of the jolly oats of folly

That were watered with the liquors of delight,—

That were grown that very night

In the jars

Of Cambridge cars!

And when we walked through Harvard Square,

It seemed the oats were scattered there;

And all along the Yard they sprang,

A cause of titubation

AN ODE TO HARVARD

As they intervened like bars,—
While the dormitories danced around and sang,
And the elms went up like rockets to the stars.

Then, when I should have gone to bed,
I felt a glory in my head
And a pencil in my hand and said,
‘I’ll write the greatest poem that ever was,’—
And since I’d heard that the letter V
Was a god of Poe’s idolatry,
I’d call my arrogation

‘IN VINO VERITAS’ :

*‘From a vineyard in old France,
Virgin as a dewy violet,
Veiled in vernal vines of trance,
Forth she fared with feet inviolate
Down an undiscovered rivulet
Of vireos and jonquils,
Forth she bared to violent glance
Violet veins in silver ankles,
Vestal feet that made advance,
Ventured vivid in a dance
To a viol’s reverberance,—
That were fervid as a salliance
In a lonely vale of France,*

AN ODE TO HARVARD

*Dale of dalliance
And chance,
That were vibrant as love's valiance
By an undiscovered rivulet
Of vireos and jonquils:
O that radiance of dance!
O that daze of complaisance!
O that vision of obeisance,
In that valley of old France!*

When I awakened in my bed,
I felt a windmill in my head,
Going round;
Hopeful I seized the verse of violet dew
From fevered realms,
To help me through—
But O, alas, could any poem be thinner!
Hopeless, I sank, like some one underground
Who wakes to suffocation from the dead.
But all the day, you shed,
O Harvard Elms,
A soft benignant lecture on my head;—
And so at last I carefully ate dinner.

The clock stands solid in the noon-day sky
Just as it used to on Memorial Tower;

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And I remember Table 32 crowded with talk,
 though the pitch got not so high
At noon, as at dinner's dinning hour;
And quickly comes another memory,
And rigid floats,
Of a certain portrait's dead Bostonian smile,
Above the aisle of many coats.

Walking around the Building once, to see
If the roofs upon the other side
Still steam with cookery,
I pass John Harvard sitting in the sun,
Cloisters behind him, and the streets ahead!

O let them paint you red,
Yet long shall you abide—
Not only in the symbol but in very truth—
A white unchanging sentinel before the days
 to be!
I greet you, Johnnie Harvard!— And the voices
 of the dead
Wake to acclaim you, grave and gracious youth!

Let slight Memorial
Who will, and criticise its style;
Still shall it rise

AN ODE TO HARVARD

A venerating pile;
And still in dedication shall it hold that sense
 inside
Of the presence of the glory of Harvard men
 who died,
Of their going-forth for fear their country fall.
 Above its tablet-bordered wall
Still are they waiting, tall
Unseen and ardent, in the dimmer lights;
Still shall they gather here immortal
In the nights;
Talking of Douglas, politics, alarms;
Of Lincoln, the election; of the call
To arms!—
Of the bullet's dance;
Of Sherman, Grant and Sheridan;
Of the glimmer of a classmate's face in the
 opposing van,
Lest in the blinding sharp command
To charge!—of the swarms
Of other faces, dropping one by one,
Of the fighting never done;
Of the way a gun lies in the hand
To kill a man;
Of the field of hell that, rising, cries
Against the skies;

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And then with bated breath,
Of a great land reunited, and a new-begun
advance,
A common stand;—
And so of Harvard College, and the Hall
That is their own Memorial.

Young Death is ever in the band,—
And it almost seems that these who know Him
love Him,
That He goes from side to side,
Still full of life's illusions and the soft surmise,
His touch on every shoulder,
And sees with far-off wonder in His eyes
The flying of the tattered flags above Him,—
That His pride is nearest,
And the closeness of His breath is dearest
To them all.—

O the deep, enduring eyes
Of Death!
The dark and wistful eyes that grow no older,
Of the only Youth of all that never dies!

Closer than ivy, cling my memories
To all these Buildings, and to all they mean.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Even the Chapel has her mute appeal,—
And Sever yonder, where the classes met,
And where I took examinations, that I can't
forget,
To prove my fitness. . . . O the frantic book
Filled with wide pencillings and wily art,
Ambiguous responses on the part
Of wisdom to seem knowledge! . . . and the
lazy blue and green
Peeping at window-panes!
And the swift, miraculous gains
Of the minute-hand—
Those last few ticks that I could hardly stand!

But I got through!—
Through entrance—and in half a flash through
exit too!

Here's the entry and the stair
Where a western Poet climbed,
With Apollo-nesian hair,
To the Heaven
(Up in Thayer)
Where his note-books thickly rhymed.—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Sometimes they'd laugh at those of us who
dared set store
By our own venturings, would bid us see instead
That the lump by now sufficiently was rising
with the heaven!
In Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, it had all been
said before.—

Perhaps they laughed at Dante in his youth,
Told him that truth
Had unappealably been said
In the great masterpieces of the dead:—
Perhaps he listened and but bowed his head
In acquiescent honour, while his heart
Held natal tidings,—that a new life is the part
Of every man that's born,
A new life never lived before,
And a new expectant art;
It is the variations of the morn
That are forever, more and more,
The single dawning of the single truth.
So answers Dante to the heart of youth!

O hail to all those happy rows of cloth and
leather comeliness,
The sober books to heal and bless,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

To fill a golden loneliness
With echoes of the starry tune,—
The madder books to tease and to excite,
To fill the crannies of the night
With ravens, and with eyes of love, and with light
O' the moon!

Coming once more upon the Yard, another
gratitude I feel.
They now have running-water in the rooms
And radiators, and the grates are used for
wood;
It's nothing now to be both warm and clean.
But it was good
To wash as Harvard men
Had had to do in earlier years,—to kneel
And poke the coals until they grew
Red as the blood
That keeps a body warm, or as a sunset seen
On frozen days; to sit in the dark and watch
the rays again
Temper the outer nipping glooms!
I'm glad that now they've heat and running-
water in the rooms.
I'm glad they hadn't then.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And there was something else we had at
first,
Until a skulking brood,
Foul-handed as a breaker into tombs,
Scuttled with dynamite
The poor old Pump. Night after night,
As it filled cool pitchers for the simpler thirst,
We'd hear the handle's friendly guttural sound;—
But the ground
Is now sealed over where it stood.

Hear how I clang the letter-box,
Where Billy the Postman came!—
A little hard of hearing he;
But he'd make it up when he'd cheerily see
'Were there any letters for Stoughton 3?'—
And when a hand with a flourishing B
Would click through the slot and fall on the
floor,
I'd bless him for bringing love's message to
me!

O I took her to games, gave her many a
tea—
But I don't even know when the wedding's
to be;
She writes me no more.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Here at this corner, Dan the Watchman
caught my arm
One night and led me home from harm.
He had a pale face, sharp as a vice,
Looked like a white owl out for mice:
But he grew at last uncannily pale,
And once I remember hearing him say,
Refreshed with a nip of ginger ale,—
'No, sir, it doesn't really pay,
You can't get the proper sleep by day;
I don't much care for it anyway.'

But to have that white face fail—
It seemed like something lost from the night,
A watchful moon of human light.

And John the Orangeman is gone upon a ra-
diant route,
And drives a donkey with white wings,
And carries unforbidden fruit
And little harps and things,
For angels who are thronging mute
To hear him how he sings!
He had one ineradicable sin,
His grin—
But Peter had to let him take it in!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

I do believe there's Mrs. Row!
She was a Goody good to know!
Her puckered face is just the same,
And, hands in air, she cries my name
As instantly as when I came
Back from the long vacation.
This is the sort of thing she says:
'Are you getting bald?' (when I raise my
 hat)
'But what can you do with brains like that?
It's too much application!'

On a corner-rack in college days
I'd had a pate that was wholly bald,
With which I'd scared her till she'd called
On the Saints for preservation!
And now I couldn't help thinking of that
And whether the skull was worn so flat
By too much application.
I put the point to Mrs. Row,
She scratched her head, and said, 'Well, no,—
I guess it's recreation!'—

I remember she borrowed one at a time
My Scott, George Eliot, Hood and Poe;
She liked both prose and rhyme.
And she read them through

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And quoted them too,
But it always made her a trifle blue
That she couldn't be sure
Of my taste being true,
For I hadn't of all of the bards she knew—
Tom Moore,
The best of them all!

O much goes by in a year
For her now!—she must be sixty-two or so;
But God will give her her due, I know!

As she stood with a smile and a tear,
'Thanks for the welcome,' I said, 'and the
cheer!—

It made me feel that I still was here.
I'd like to stay; but I've got to go.'
'So have we all!' said Mrs. Roe,
'But I'll wait in the door for you.'

Back through the Yard by Wadsworth, where
the preachers still are kept,
(Where Washington and Emerson and other
great have slept!—)
Back to the Avenue
I go, finding it through

AN ODE TO HARVARD

An iron Fence with posts and gates of brick,
Too formal for that trick
Of loitering, as we used to do, by simple wooden
bars,
And talking to the tune of cars.—

Old Yard, good-bye again!—With your friendly
trees of knowledge,
You were fully half, yes more than that, the
better half of college!
O think of the luckless wights
Whom all this didn't please,
Who'd rather have electric lights
Than memories like these—
Than luxuries like these!

Often we'd walk in town,
Thereby less idly to be missing classes;
And often in or out we'd wait on Harvard
Bridge to see
A gull that caught the sunlight overhead;
Or a crew that sped
Symmetrical; or a single shell slide under,
narrow
As an arrow,—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And watch the rower, his white flesh turning
brown,
Bending his back, his arm, his knee,
Spending his brawn, his muscle and his marrow
Close with his heart to ply
The quiet swiftness of his revelry,
Sending his oar as with a wing to fly;
Later we'd watch the western sky,
With poppies hung from head to feet,
Go feasting to his many-tapered bed,
Where restless he would lie
On the scattered golden sheet,
And then at last, deep
In a great ecstasy,
Would fall asleep,
Closing in tranquil clouds of night, like a petal
in the grasses;
Or, later still, we'd see
That bayonet-row of lights,
March by the River Charles, patrol by many
a home
The huddling heights
Of Boston town,
And lead where, like the crystal vision of a
camp, looked down
The ancestral Dome.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Or else we'd take those other walks
Along the outer circle by the river,
Past Soldiers' Field, inhaling for our health
the marshy gases. . . .

Remember with me, Comrade, how those close,
congenial talks
Would patter from the moment to forever!

Over that crude see-sawing bridge of yesterday,
After the morning's rain,
I took alone, from half-past four to six last
night again,
The old-time way,
The ridge of path that sloped from miry stubble,
Between the looping river, full of steely,
blurred reflections,
And an inchoate landscape-plan
Made of roads and tracks and spaces.

Sharp in shadow stood the trees against a sky
Where, colossally ascending,
Came a sign of cloudy trouble
From the furnace of creation and, with indus-
tries of man
From their chimneys tall as churches, transcen-
dentially was blending

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Everything of great and little in a multitudinous
gray
Overhead.

There to the left was life, where the young
men ply their graces,
Running, jumping, throwing hammers,—where
the body is at play
And its destiny is amorous and young
As the life-blood in their faces.

Across the river lie
The resting-places
Of the dead;
And there, as though the night were their es-
pecial hour,
None others using it so well as they,
I heard the bell, that rings at dusk beside the
balconied tower,
Send gently with its iron tongue
All those that wake away.

Across the river then I cried aloud
In a great wonderment,
As men have cried in anguish without cease,—
'O where are you today,
You vanished faces?'

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And while the twilight wind's caprice
But echoed what I said,
But questioned from the future, asking me,—
More than before the shroud that hung
From tree to tree,
Half with an air of shelter and of peace,
Was infinitely still.

Yet I believe that heaven is on that hill;
That each who blindly loved the single soul
Shall thence illustriously love the whole;
And with the leaves that fall and fly
And with the river lifting by
Into the overwhelming sky,
That these are lifted, these who die,
To the remotest corners of their destiny,—
Infinitesimal in light to lie
Farthest and nearest in infinity;
That into breath of the mysterious Will
The worlds are welding in that little hill,—
Where all shall be the mother and the son,
The daughter and the father and the One.

Below the walk, was caught in muddy pools
a last and sudden radiance from the sky;
Beyond me went the outspread land dissolving
in the distant view,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Save for the lights that half-unseen
Were twinkling through pale purple mist, like
webs of dew;
Behind me was old Cambridge, low and
steeped;
And there and eastward was the region peopled,
Green, yellow, white, and violet, on the gray.
Across the river were the lights but few,
As though Mount Auburn with its candles
lay,
Before eternity.

Around a bank of night that came between
I heard a muffled voice,—then nearer, terse
commands;
And I watched emerge an eight-oar crew
From the darkness that was falling,
Like visionary oarsmen (but for the coxswain
calling,)
And enter it again with ghostly hands.

Turning, I saw the Stadium dimly stand, as
though it half withdrew
Into its other centuries, as though it held its
galleried wall to intercept,
Its arching silences to screen,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

A pageantry and great review
Of memories with which it stirred.

Perhaps a thousand years from now
Somebody, near a Stadium,
Shall see the padded phantoms come
And feel himself in dreamy thrall
Of ancient phrensies of foot-ball.

Had I drawn nearer, I had heard
A breath of wonder through a Grecian throng
At feet that flew,
At bodies that were exquisite and strong,
A cry of rapture at the crown of green,
The earth's own halo on her holy few—
Who stood with limbs as shining as the sea
And hearts that were the wings of victory;
Or I had heard the scrape of weapons glad-
iators drew,
The cry of one that fell,
The step of one that slew,
Or seen the faithful, terrible farewell
Of some believer in the Nazarene.

The wind was down and hardly blew;—
The evening whispered on my cheek,
The river trickled on its pebbly edge;

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And in the sedge
I heard the peep of a deluded bird.
By fences then I clambered back,
And went by an inner, shorter track;
Where, under a lamp that cut the black,
Came a runner, out of darkness like the fellows
 at the oars,
With a dusky flash of sweater and white legs,—
 a fading streak
Of body in the odour of out-doors.—

When homeward by the bridge I took my
 way,
I watched along the watery strip of park,
Each separate light stand spearing in the
 dark,—
As lights of thought strike into yesterday.

And now I turn and pass once more
That road to Soldiers' Field,
Where on great days would pour,
As thick as lava to the Gates,
A mighty yield
Of college-mates,
Of friends, of relatives, of bright-eyed Fates,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

The Cambridge boy,
And *hoi polloi*,
And the juvenescent graduates.

It was then a wooden horse-shoe, where now
the Stadium stands
With its air of classic lands;
But when occasion congregates
The many into one,
It's the same great sea of a thousand coloured
shadows in the sun.
And the heroes! O the heroes!
How we'd greet them as they trotted in,
Hail them with voices, banners, hands,
Drowning the brazen blare of the bands!—
And then the silence, to begin
And change the score from zeroes!—
And O the coach, and referee,
And ready row of candidates!
And O the game that hesitates,—
Agglomerates,—
Disintegrates!
And the cryptic, quick commands!
And the man on the line who regulates!
And the man in the air who tabulates!
And the craning, crowded stands!—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

The multitude that gravitates,
And, inarticulate, intonates
When he makes a gain and lands!—
And the girl at your side who palpitates
But never understands!—

To have it go against you, is but harder to
employ
The spur of glee,
The cheering and the singing in the wild antiph-
ony,
The heavier to send your voice into that roaring
burst
That thrills you even more today than when
you heard it first.
The megaphone annunciates,
And the players, one by one,
Are named, and then the answer booms like a
saluting gun!
Or else if the score resuscitates,
Bobs like a saving buoy,
The crimson surges tidal, and the people rock
with joy!
And then, with a minute more to play,
To give the crowning touch to the day,
He places the ball and calculates,—
It lifts and never deviates,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And the fellows, like inebriates,
Dance and hug and run,
And the girl beside you demonstrates
That at last she understands,—
While all the sky tumultuates,
And heaven and earth shake hands!

One memorable year,
When we won a game from Yale
With a score that you could hear
Around the world,
Saw a scene on Boylston Street—
It was like a stretching sail
That no hundred years' defeat
Could have furled,—
Like a torrent that was winding back to break
on Harvard Square,
That was curling, swirling, whirling, with great
reaches in the air!
Why, the crowd had been in coming
But a stream that softly purred,
By this rushing, hurling, humming,
High incontinent return!
Not so steep will be the churn
Even closest to the stern
Of the comet bearing Chaos for a tail!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Round the Yard with pace triumphal then we
filed,
And beyond, to Jarvis Field, where soon was
piled
Thick fuel for a fire;
And the red tongues, crowding higher,
Seemed a sort of crimson crier
To the people in the stars
That we'd broken down the bars
And were out upon the highways, going wild!
So we marched with tingling feet,
Rousing Cambridge to the beat
Of the figures of the score as to a drumming.
And the President and Dean went through
their paces,
Made us speeches from their porches
With our torches
In their faces.
The President spoke nicely, but before he was
half through
Was devoting his attention altogether to the
crew.
Yet our cheers were no less true to him,
For a lot of things were due to him
And it didn't seem enough to do to dedicate the
crew to him!—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Wherever a window opened wide
And heads looked out, as soon as spied
They were told the news with another cheer,
For it was news they ought to hear!

At one, a woman and a child
Leaned in the light of a crimson-shaded lamp
that stood behind,
And brought to my excited mind
A favouring Madonna who had held her Babe
and smiled
On Crusaders from some banner that was crimson
in the wind!

But soon she broke the picture, and a moment
went inside,
And, returning, held her baby towards us with
a crown of red—
She'd put the paper lamp-shade on his happy
little head!

All that was long ago.—
It was this morning that I came
Down Brattle Street, and felt it newly strange,
How people change and change
Towards that darkest change of all,
That hides them from our sight,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And how Nature, while she changes, yet returns
the same.

That fine old man of Cambridge—I never knew
his name—

With an English squire's air of beef and ale,
With bearded cheek as hardy brown
As an orchard in the fall,
And with gaitered stride that marched the town,
And miles of country too,—
I saw him come this morning into view
As though he were a stranger to me quite;
He's not so tall;—
How white
His hair is! and his step how frail!
His face how pale!
Was it some sickness?—or the silent stroke by
which the hold is lost?—
See how about us in the chill of twilight,
Stricken by the silent frost,
The leaves come down!

Before long *I'll* be old and gray,—
Returning to Commencement-day
With stories of the happy way
We used to get together,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Until that final June of mine. . . .
I think I heard the ladies say
The day was very fine,—
But I wasn't caring then about the weather!
I was thinking of a fellow who had had the sense
to go
Out of Cambridge to a place—it doesn't matter,
I don't know—
But to skip the celebration
And the jaunty fuss and feather,
And to contemplate in quiet
That fêted fatal day,
That melancholy day!
It would never be the same again when once
he'd gone away.
But I stayed with all the riot,
In funereal cap and gown,
At the spreads where cake was broken
And congratulations spoken;
And I danced Memorial dances;
And I guided merry glances
Through the Yard that streamed with lanterns
and with laughing laureation;
The Yard that, though a wilderness of music
and delight,
Was mighty little nicer than it always is at night.—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Then when the chatterers had gone,
Leaving us few at last alone,
We drank the good old College down
To the farthest end of time in all her glory!
And if we drank her deeper down—
It's still the single story:
The beginning of tomorrow means the ending
of today
Was what we all knew well enough—and didn't
want to say!

The morrow,
When I peered above the shutter,
Lay in flimsy desolation
Like a last unhappy flutter
Of that festival of sorrow:
Pallid lanterns, trodden grass,
And spent confetti,
Made the heyday of the class
Look pretty petty.

Round we met in twos and threes,
With our mournful pleasantries;
O, it seemed annihilation to give up your rooms
for good,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Not knowing who would have them next,—
The packing, and the finding, and the vivid
sad recalling,

The burning of an excellent but evil-gotten text,
The forsaking of the old tin box that held the
midnight food,—

And the sum of all of these:

The discovery, in midst of overhauling,
That in college, as in other things, who enters
must make way,—

To every man his college-time, to every dog
his day!

And the ardours of ambition shone and
struggled quite in vain

On that day of dark perdition, in that dismal
inner rain.

If I haven't mentioned learning,

Here's to it in a line!

I'm afraid before returning

I'd forgotten most of mine.

But if from all those studious days

I hadn't kept a thing,

What I got in other ways—

Nothing else could bring.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And so I leave you, Harvard College, with a
grateful sigh
For what I shall have had before I die;
For the Yard and trees and friends and rhymes
And laughs and Mrs. Row,
And for all the good old times
That had to go.

O, I'll never, drunk or sober,
No, I'll never, late or soon,
Find again that first October,
Lose again that final June!—

If only it could all be new-begun,
Never to end!
It's a different kind of fun
When you watch it in a cousin or a friend!

So I see what I must do!—
I must get a son to send!
Then in my blood again I'll truly know,
As first I knew two hundred years ago,
At last, old Harvard College,—it is you!

Yet is that altogether true?
Must we, then, wait so long?—
As wandering from the Yard I take my thought,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Casting about me as I ought,
I find that I was wrong!

This is not all that Harvard College brought,
This throng
Of memories that now come back
To emphasize a present lack,
To mourn themselves experienced and done,
Unless renewed in a prospective son.
For, tell me, shall *Fair Harvard* ever cease
The hymn, the praise, the song,
To bring a sense of majesty, a thrill of peace?
Or at a game with Yale
Shall the ardour ever fail
Of the passion for the Crimson, for the Crimson
to prevail?
Or when an undergraduate is kind,
And tries to bring his mind
To the names of certain Freshmen whom I knew,
Shall I fail to feel his courtesy, and know it to
be true,
And fear it to be twice as kind as what I used
to do
For older men?
Or shall I miss that promise of the prize
When I see her sons come forth again
The future in their eyes?

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Harvard is indivisible and strong:
She has her cities and her states,
Her countries,
Her philosophies;
The smallest vision for me that relates
To life, gives Harvard—well, at any rate, a
corner.—

I, who came back to Cambridge as a mourner,
Take with me now a many-rayed sun
To show me what I've won,
Shining as bright on Harvard in New York or
Zuyder Zee
As on the roof of Stoughton Hall, or on the Tree
Of trophies, that in those other years
Was shaken with the scramble and the cheers.—

Can I forget that look from eye to eye,
That wave of hand,
When I was travelling alone in Switzerland,
And, edging down the Rigi in a car, saw climb-
ing by
Upon the other track
A man I'd known but slightly
In the class!—
Saw him brightly,
Felt him pass

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Into the dark of travel that encloses;
Yet knew that Harvard was in both our hearts;—
We peeped at stars and Harvard was the glass!

In him I might have found,
I knew it in that glance,
What I had nearer known in other men,
And in his countenance
Under a foreign sky,
Brown with the same old sun,—
I saw what I had seen on Cambridge streets.

You may credit me with judgment fairly sound,
When my second thought supposes
That it matters little whom a fellow meets,
In the time, the college-time, when the heart
 of living beats,
Not its completest,
Never all its sweetest,
But its first sure pulses of the man to be.
Then every man is good to know,
For God his Maker made him so!—
More than the child, the boy, the youth,
Happily less than the loser of truth,
It's the man who talks and laughs and smokes,
Who sets his cap at life and eats,
Who scoffs and hopes, and prays and jokes,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And masters his defeats;
While the Unmaker still is overthrown,
And the unbroken heart of living, still prophetic
beats

A monotone

Triumphant over death.

In every man who draws that breath,
There is a heavenly vision of his destiny,—
The everlasting lamp has not yet flickered out,
But burns the brighter in the winds of doubt;
And so in every man may friendship find
The something that is finer than the mind,
The feeling, for the sake of his eternal soul,
That God and men shall help to make him
whole.

O blessed are the early ways to share
The mystery of being not alone.

One man there was whose presence I had
always thought to keep,
Who yet had seemed awhile ago
Estranged and different, as though nearness
being passed
The friendship couldn't last;
And so our light talk emptily was cast

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Upon the shallows; until suddenly
Questions arose of moment and of near concern;
And then a richer cargo of his gifts came forth
to me

In glad return
Than ever had forsaken me.

And deep,—

O deeper than till then we'd dreamed to know,
We felt the reach of friendship's mystery,
The ultimate newness of the past!

It's not the strong men who had gone before us,
Not Lowell, Emerson, or who you will,
Who visit us so closely and restore us
To the early fine intentions;—
It's the men we knew in crudeness and in im-
mature dimensions,—

Whom we lose and then we find again
And feel the old ties bind again
With intimate reminder;
Whom, seeing less and knowing longer,
We discover still,—
The weaker growing stronger,
The stronger growing kinder!

And it's not those fellows only who had the
luck to go

AN ODE TO HARVARD

To Harvard for their schooling whom Harvard
helps us know;—
It's men of other colleges, it's men of none at
all,
It's men who never even heard the name of
Stoughton Hall,
Where first I felt that wisdom which today I
try to use,
Which I often lose
But look for with a will;
For though I still forget, yet I remember still
That when a man inclines to set below him
Some neighbour, or conceive dislike, he need
but seek
In silence for the right, at last, to speak:
'What can I do but like him,—for I know him!'

Gay at times, but no less sober,
O that manful young October!
O that muslin mischief June,
With her sad momentous moon!—
They were dear deceiving lovers
So this latter day discovers.

Yet in spite of all his boon,
Should he jog, sedate and sober,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Toward a humdrum honeymoon?—
There he goes, the young October!
There she waits, the gentle June!

To the devil with the doubt!
Let Harvard be the Sign!—
When I stop to think it out,
What I am and must be with you, what I might
 have been without,—
Why, the memories I took for you
Give way to resurrection in all the world about!
And I only need to look for you,
And use my right divine,—
To find you, Harvard College, and to have you
 always mine!

For Christ and for His Church they founded
 you;
And through the years has simple Truth suf-
 ficed,—
No separating doctrine has confounded you
Before an unintelligible Christ;
For Christ and for His Church you open still
The lofty aisles of worship and good-will.—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

O Harvard College, in the spirit's fight
America has need of you!—O let your might
Become her captain and her strong delight!

O mean to all those others whom you'll see
The thousand things in one you mean to me!

O lift forever on the shield of truth,
Before the armies of mortality,
The sounding challenge of the spear of youth!

POEMS

TO GEORGE MEREDITH

O Master, from the all you learned,
Above the cloudy mountain-brinks,
And at the edge where sunsets burned,
And amongst men—deep have you turned
The smiling eyelids of the Sphinx!

Invisible upon her paw sits death,—
Confronted by her visage finely fraught
With all the dear solemnity of breath,
And smiling eyelids of mysterious thought.

If men shall mock at mimicry in stone,
Which is not beast nor woman, whole nor half,
Let them but look what structure is their own
Of unimagined flesh and vanished bone—
And listen at her lips and hear her laugh!

O Meredith, this creature you have left,
With ample flanks, and poetry on her brow,
This wonder you have builded strong and deft,
Shall sit for centuries as calm as now!

She shall behold the mortal multitude
Passing in joy, in vanity, in grief,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

The vast mirage amazingly renewed,
The fury of the everlasting feud,
The green returning of the desert leaf.

With death among the sands upon her paw
And desert round her she shall sit content,
And shall behold, shall contemplate in awe,
Man and his covering of firmament.

Silently, safely, in good time,
Great master of the minds of men,
You builded to a wider clime
Than Egypt, and have left, sublime,
A Sphinx to tease the world again.

HILL-SONGS

I

On we climb, keeping time
To hidden goat-bells' nibbling chime,
Feet in the dew of ferns we climb,
Souls in a sort of winding rhyme,
Up the path that turns and turns
Toward the top where morning burns.

II

Though a flower of the dust
Droop and die,
Who'll be moody with mistrust?
You? . . . I?

III

Tears, tears,
Are by with the years,
Are dry on the cheeks of the dead. . . .
It's better to laugh
At the whole or the half
Of the luck (or lack) that's ahead;
Or to sleep it away—
And not have to pay
For the bed!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

IV

Now in the wood,
Birds of the wood
Sing and are merry,
Tears are no good,
Fears are no good,—
Thought is the stone of the cherry.

V

The days number seven,
Then seven,—
I tell you, that's heaven a plenty!
Or should you want more,
Divide them by four
And twenty,—
Times sixty,—times seven,
For infinite heaven!

VI

Here's a tree
Making shade
Just for me
And a maid.

AND OTHER POEMS

VII

Who could begin
Thinking of sin?
Sin only comes with repentance!
If ever we sin,
Let's never begin,
Signing our sentence!

VIII

Look at me!—Tell me now,
What do you think? . . .
Could anyone anywhere
Happier drink
Of the springs of the world
In the cups of the air?—
Anyway, anyway
What do we care?

IX

Was that a kiss?
Were those your eyes?
Or was it bliss
In paradise?
I felt on your lips the perfect rhyme!
I saw in your eyes the end of time!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

X

Yonder,
 To trespass,
Lie orchards and farms,—
But I'm fonder
 Of trespassing
Here in your arms.

XI

The bell
Of noon. . . .
And soon
There's less of light. . . .
And then the bell
Of night. . . .
Or was it noon? . . .

XII

It must be midnight,
 Sweeter noon
 Of lesser light,—
For there's a moon!

XIII

Answer me, ancestress,
 What do you see,

AND OTHER POEMS

With eyes that from Eden
Are looking at me?—
That there's not any knowledge, nor ser-
pent, nor sword?—
But only the Lord?
Only the Lord!

XIV

See! there's a dew,
And night is black;
And stars are few,
Tracing a track
To lead us back!

XV

Down we climb, keeping time
To watery pebbles' hidden chime,
Feet in the dews of sleeping ferns,
Souls in a love that, waking, burns
Doubt and every fear away,
Trembling with a dawn that yearns
Into day.

XVI

Good-night,
And sleep you well!—

AN ODE TO HARVARD

While on the pasture-height
A bell,
Another, and another, tell
The end of night,
Hang a shawl to hide the beam
Of the sun!
And, though apart, afar,
We'll dream as one,—
You of a high hill shall dream,
I of a star!

XVII

It's morning—hear the village bell?
Good-night! good-night ! and sleep you
well! . . .
I of a star. . . .

THE POOL

O it is pleasant, on the naked brink,
Idly awhile of happy things to think!

A man like me set out that curve of trees,
A man like me cut out these tiles of stone,
And out of other stones and trees were grown
Under his hand those towers in the breeze.

And only over yonder sunny wall
There is a heart would answer should I call.

And when I've done with thinking and would
fain

Be safe and free, I need but bend, but dive,
And with a rush my body is alive,
And there is no one but myself again.

My image upside-down is at my feet,
So is life doubly mine and doubly sweet.

‘SO KIND YOU ARE’

You have an eye more warmly brown
Than autumn days away from town,
But will not let me speak my mind,
So kind you are and so unkind.

You have a cheek as white and red
As apple-blossoms overhead,
Just where the sunshine strikes me blind,
So kind you are and so unkind.

You have a voice with all the moods
Of twilights and of solitudes,
But light to leave me as the wind,
So kind you are and so unkind.

You have, however far I be,
A trick of coming near to me,—
Though out of sight, not out of mind,
So kind you are and so unkind.

The way would seem not half so soon
To reach your heart as reach the moon,
Yet it's a way I'll surely find—
So kind you are and so unkind.

HEY-DAY

Come and go a-berrying,
Would you wiser be!
Come and learn that everything
Younger is than we—

We who almost dared to think
In our wearying
There were no more springs to drink,
No more pails to swing!

We were dusty with our books.
Come and let us go
Out among the lyric brooks,
Where the verses grow,

Where the world is one delight
Made of many a song
Lasting till the nod of night,
Lovely all day long,

Till the smallest glimmering nook
Holds the moon in glory;
And the heavens are the book
And the stars the story!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

There the peaceful earth is sweet,
 Either way it lies—
Under unacquainted feet
 Or on tired eyes.

THE ROBIN

Except within poetic pale

I have not found a nightingale,
Nor hearkened in a dusky vale

To song and silence blending;
No stock-dove have I ever heard,
Nor listened to a cuckoo-bird,

Nor seen a lark ascending.
But I have felt a pulse-beat start

Because a robin, spending
The utmost of his simple art
Some of his pleasure to impart

While twilight came descending,
Has found an answer in my heart,
A sudden comprehending.

GRENSTONE RIVER

Things you heard that blessed be
You shall tell to men like me:

What you heard my lover say
In the golden yesterday,
Leaving me a childish heart,
Glad to revel, quick to start.

And though she awhile is gone
And I come to-day alone,
'Tis the self-same whisper slips
Through your ripple from her lips.

Long shall she and I be dead,
While you whisper what she said;
You, when I no word can give her,
Shall forever whisper, river:

Things you heard that blessed be,
Telling them to men like me.

CLOVER

‘Come and sing a song, lover!’

‘Very well; I’ll sing of clover;
Sweet, sweet, honey-sweet,
Hardy in the open heat,
Strayed from meadow-full to street,
Sweet, sweet, honey-sweet!
Bees bumble as they meet,
Cattle curl a tongue and eat,
Children play with trampling feet,
Lovers come and hearts beat,
Sweet, sweet, honey-sweet.
There’s the song I sing of clover.’

‘Nothing of yourself, lover?’

MERCURY

Celia, you spoke and said,—
'See where it sinks! see how it's turning red!'
And when you ended, a far whip-poor-will,
With first one faint and unaccustomed note,
(A sober-souled comedian at prayer),
And all the pines, from hill to hill
In reverential pilgrimage, breathed to the air,
O, not in words!—in worlds instead!—
'See where it sinks! see how it's turning red!'

Celia, you spoke and said,—
*'Not Mercury, nor any star
Could be so red;
It must have been instead
A window on the hill!'*—
So slow of faith you are,
And doubting still,
Yet heard the pines,
When Mercury was red,
The whip-poor-will,
And all the peaceful voices of the dead,
And me beside you in the evening air—
Saying the single prayer!

THE HYPOCRITE

When Celia said that for her sake
I must not take of wine,
My habit or her heart must break,
I straightway drew the line—
Yet not so much for Celia's sake
As secretly for mine.

By grace of her I'm full of wit,
Or think I am—what matters it?

I gave it up because I won
A wine thereby so rare
That out of all the vineyards none
Has yielded to compare!—
I left it off because I won
The sparkling of her hair!

By grace of her I feel my worth
Immortal on a mortal earth.

And Celia meantime loves to laud
My exodus from vice,
And does not guess me by the fraud

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Intoxicated thrice,
Watches in fact a little awed
The seeming sacrifice.

I wonder would she take amiss
Confession of my wickedness?

‘THE LOVES OF EVERY DAY’

He thinks not deep who hears the strain
Of gentle-hearted Nicolette
And fears that nevermore again
To such a tune will love be set
Of daisies and the foot that let
Them look but shadows on the way
To where the olden lovers met;—
These are the loves of every day.

The heart that makes of binding chain
A linkèd song for Nicolette,
The heart that ventures perilous pain,
That needs no counsel, heeds no threat,
And hearts that hear and answer yet
The blessing of the holy ray
Of evening from her minaret,—
These are the loves of every day.

Not only shall the story gain
For Aucassin and Nicolette
Woods green with an immortal rain;
But long as human eyes go wet

AN ODE TO HARVARD

For lovers, or till time forget
That we can love as well as they
In triumph over mortal fret,—
These are the loves of every day.

ENVOY

Poet, yours is a vain regret
That Aucassin has gone his way!
We have him still with Nicolette;—
These are the loves of every day.

THE PRETTY LADIES

Look through those windows, Dick,
Where there's all the lights, and see
The pretty ladies dancing!
That's just like heaven to me!—
O Dick, I do love music so,
It's just like heaven to me!

. . . But this is better, Dick,
I like this better, see!
For one of those pretty ladies
Might take you away from me. . . .
O, if one of those pretty ladies, Dick,
Should take you away from me!

THE CHAPLET

When I came home at evening
 With flowers in my hand,
And on my head a chaplet
 From an enchanted land,
Not one of those that passed me
 Appeared to understand.

They thought that like the others
 I wore a hat, and went
As prosy on the sidewalk
 As one collecting rent—
They knew not who had kissed me
 Nor all the matter meant.

THE BEGGAR

Dear and dead brother whom I mourn,
A beggar on the street
Whispered to me with face forlorn
And wanted food to eat.

I could not find him after that,
For many a likely crook
Had just that coat and just that hat
But none of them that look.

If he was living whom I used
So ill, I cannot tell,—
Or if the face that I refused
Was yours I loved so well!

THE MARIONETTES

A boy with a face like some Greek coin
Leans in the second row,
To help each mimic hero join
Against the Moslem foe.

The gas reflecting in his eyes,
That swerve not left nor right,
Burns, every time a pagan dies,
With freshness of delight.

These are but dolls of brass and wood
Whose destinies begun
He watches till the end is good
And victory is won.

Is there an eye of endless light
For what we do and dare?
Or are we playing to the night
With nobody to care?

MARCELLO MACELLO

I'm in the hospital and he
Lies at his house upstairs,
For that is where he had to be
Or mind his own affairs.

He thought that he could catch my girl,
Sporting his fancy vest;
But she's a bird, she doesn't care
The way a fellow's dressed.

I tried to fight him fists and fair;
His knife was what got me;—
But there'll be singing at his house
And he'll not hear it, see!

✓

AN ODE TO HARVARD

AN APRIL IN MADISON SQUARE

Between Diana, captive on her tower,
And Vulcan, in his chariot of stone,
Young Pan, as in an earlier, happier hour,
Returns with ancient antics of his own;—
Pauses and peers to find his curious face
Leer, slide, and lift with shattering laughs of
spray,
From dim reflections at the fountain's edge;
And here he comes and leans the livelong
day,
Winding an alternately tender pace,
As when he tiptoed peeping through the
sedge.

Betweenwhile he is jealous of the sod
That opens yonder to the cleaving spade,
Till he has rubbed his hoof on every clod,
Before the yellow pansy-bloom is laid,—
Catching the wheel, making the barrow stick,
Dodging behind it, and in golden ground
Poking an angle-worm to deep retreat;
Yet merging every antic, every sound,
And every ecstasy at every trick—
Into the rhythm of the children's feet.

AND OTHER POEMS

This is the Pan who laughed because he loved,
Who stood astride with gaily puffing cheek
And blew the clinging green, so that it moved
Its misty wings, warm summer-time to seek;
Often he leaps upon a bench to rest . . .
I feel him, while I wait here in the Square,
Glow by my side as never sun could glow,
Cross his gay legs of tufty, curly hair,
And hold his pipes close, close against his breast,
Adding another to the tunes they know.

When cautiously I turn, lest he be wild
And dart away, I find, instead of Pan,
A wider-eyed and yet a Pan-like child,
Who when he saw me round a tree-trunk ran
Because I looked, but ventures back and bends
A twinkling face, dares me to understand
The presence of a mate whom once I knew,
Revealed at every motion of his hand,—
For lightly by his little finger-ends,
You're leading him, O Pan, to go like you!

This is a noon I never shall forget;—
It may not be like this another day,
You may not come again, young Pan! And yet
Have I not felt you snuggle close and say

AN ODE TO HARVARD

That when you knelt to Him of Nazareth,
 Crept through the hay to spy the infant face
 That gathered all the pagan stars in one,
Your old star, sanctified to greater grace,
Was newly yours, by the soft-crowing breath
 With which He crowned your innocence of
 fun?

And so I know by every child of glee—
 That little girl who holds against her breast
The burning of Vesuvius over-sea
 And San Francisco burning in the west,
And reads the bitter tidings upside-down,
 This little boy who teases her to play
 And finds her fast as he when once they
 start—
 That Pan, young Pan, is no more dead than
 they!
For I have seen him dancing into town,
 And heard his laughter piping in his heart!

‘NOW, O MY MOTHER’

Unheeding I had often heard
How, when you were but three,
You had a doll whose face was blurred,
A broken doll was she,
And yet the cracks and seams and glue
Meaning the deeper need of you,
You took her to your mother-breast
And held her close and loved her best.

Now, O my Mother, when I come
From what I thought disgrace,
With all the slow unhappy sum
Of failure in my face,—
When there is nothing left to do
But just to tell it all to you—
O, how I'll show the world of men!—
You took me to your heart again!

THE INTERVAL

The least we can do is to live, a short or a
longer time,
And give what we have to give, in the valiant
pantomime,
Of muscle, or love, or rhyme.

The most we can do is to die,—contented, dis-
content;
With a few to wonder why, and whither our
spirit went,
And what the interval meant!

Who more, since the ages began, hath known
of the secret of breath
Than that life is the question of man, and that
time continueth
The empty answer,—death!

But O the mad heart, it is beating! and beauty
seems lastingly bright,
As if it could never go fleeting afar on the feet
of delight,
And be lost in the thicket of night!

THE DESERTER

High is the fife and low the drum,
And people lean to see,
And hats are off where heroes come,
And none is off to me.

And women's eyes are wet with pride
If luck or woe it be—
If he have lived or if he died,
And none are wet for me.

O home was cool and faint and far,
And I had marched with death,
When fever brought, as from a star,
At last a voice, a breath!

My sweetheart's living breath, it came
In one great rift of air!—
Till I stole out and had no shame,
Hung back and did not care.

And I was sick to say good-bye,
And fell along the shore;
For O I did not dare to die,
Not once to see her more!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

On ship as in a dream I lay,
Uncertain what I'd done;
And then remembrance broke one day
And set not with the sun.

One hope, one right, was all I had
Still high to hold my head—
It was not fear had made me mad
But love!—when I had fled . . .

And though perhaps the girl would grieve,
She'd give me grace to live,
For she would listen and believe,
Would cherish and forgive.

Out of my soul the lover's song,
To tell her I had come,
Rose with the sun and sang along
The stretching roofs of home.

Swift to the house upon that street
My dreams had seen at sea
I blundered on elated feet,
She was so dear to me!

The people answered she was gone,—
O yes, they knew me well—

AND OTHER POEMS

And 'Where?' I asked them every one,
And none of them could tell.

By now I've had it proven plain
She wished me not to know;
But here I am come back again,—
I know not where to go!

For if I lived or if I died
She waited not to see;
For women's hearts are faint with pride
And none with shame for me.

And bugles blow this day when I
Am clean forgot by more
Than those that had the luck to die
In the uniform they wore.

There's drum and fife, and eyes are damp,
And they're marching knee and knee;
A comrade looks upon a tramp—
But knows him not for me.

Look close, old friend, O closer yet
Into this bearded face!
Couldn't you catch, and then forget,
Some half-remembered trace?

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Think of the sweethearts in the crowd
For fellows in the line,—
Fellows who kept the faith they vowed
As ill as I kept mine!

O there is neither death nor life
Nor anything for me—
Yet here's my hat to the same old fife's
'My country, 'tis of thee'!

BACCHANALIAN

Fling back your heads, women, heavy with
grape clusters!

Toss your mad torches! Illumine the lustres
—Like sunny-shot flecks on a black, black sea—
Afloat in her eyes, bewildering me.

The Earth is a jewel; he hangs 'mid the
hair,
He gleams 'mid the teeth of my Paradise there,
Who tilts back a face that was born to be-
guile;
And his nights are her tresses, his days are her
smile.

And her bosom is Time. And the Future her
face.
And her fingers are Fate. And her being is
Space.
And her breath is All-Sound; wherefore I am
All-Hearing.
To lose her were Death; it is nearing!

Bacchus, thou callest; thy wine putteth wings
On their purple-wet feet; and it sings,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

As it bleeds from their overflung jars,
A song to her eyes, which have drunk of the
stars.

Thou hast captured my feet unawares,
Till lustful I struggle to burst from thy snares,
And seize her, the Body and Soul of thy band—
But the flight of her garment is hot in my hand.

Let thy joy, Bacchus, leap like the joy of a sea:—
Those eyes are thy mistress, returnèd to thee.
Lift up the wild bowl! She is lost! I am dead!
Space and Time, Fate and Future, are fled.

TWO SONGS

A nightingale sang of the birth of a rose,
Of her richness of breath,
Of her nearness to death,
And her close.

And the rose, feeling heaven a desert above,
Sent a thrill to the earth
Of her death and her birth
And her love.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

A BALLAD OF MARRIAGE

Gather up blossoms!
Let them in handfuls
Lighten like torchlight her hair and her blushes!
Clash the glad cymbals,
Put strength to the lute!
On the floor be there roses, not rushes!—
Some of them white for her maidenhood!—some,
for her love and its flushes,
Red as a sun arisen in beauty through passion-
ate hushes
Of morning! White be the roses, white as her
lovely desire!
Lift up the lute and the lyre!
Red let the roses be, red as his heart is that
trembles,
That leaps and leaps with the cymbals,
Red as its fire!

Is other joy complete?—
Or any joy so sweet
Through all the wide earth
As in love-thoughts that beat,
Advance, retreat,
Mad with their birth!

AND OTHER POEMS

This is their hour!
Their time! their power!
Bow every heart to them!
Bow every flower!
Bow every melody!
Bow every pleasure!
Earth is their drinking-cup,
Heaven their measure!

Though white was her veil against her lips
That parted as in play,
Yet whiter was her waiting cheek
Than all her bride's array;

Bright though the feast, the light in her eyes
That opened as in play
Was whiter than ever any light
That blessed a marriage-day.

And though the wedding-music flew
As many a merry bird
Might soaring sing it, yet the tread
Of dreams was all she heard,

Of dead dreams that in pallid file
Came forward one by one

AN ODE TO HARVARD

To kneel in silent courtesy,
As living dreams had done.

From the woven woods a point-eared boy
With leap and leafy scent
Fled by as fast as he before
Had followed where she went.

And one who had wooed but yesterweek,
Lord of a moonlit land,
While he mistily kissed her maiden cheek,
Let lie her wedded hand.

Then passed a knight of starry mien
Who had vowed when she should need
To come and clasp her from alarm
Close on a flying steed.

And he to whom she had dreamed she would
yield
In a swoon of sweet surprise,
Bent tragic down with curvèd lips
That trembled on her eyes.

And last, but not so shadowy
As he before had come,

AND OTHER POEMS

Stood a shape that thrice had visited
With veiled mouth and dumb.

And he whispered now, at both her ears
Amid her circling hair,
How her lily-body and her soul
And her listless lips were rare!

And she heard his deathly whispering,
Though soon he went his way,
And there entered at her lids again
The light of a marriage-day:

The sight of an honest knight, aglow
With honest knightly pride,
Who in love with his cup, his wife and the
world,
Sat singing at her side,
Who shouted and hummed and laughed along
Till the echoes never died,
And sang her just such a marriage-song
As should be sung to a bride.

This is their hour!
Their time! their power!
Bow every heart to them!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Bow every flower!
Bow every melody!
Bow every pleasure!
Earth is their drinking-cup,
Heaven their measure!

Gather up blossoms!
Hurl them in handfuls
To hover like snow on her hair and her
blushes!

Strike the mad cymbals,
Put stress to the lute!

On the floor be there roses, not rushes!—
Some, for her maidenhood, white!—some, for
her love and its flushes,
Red as the sun that is sunken, mute, amid shadowy hushes
Of evening! Red be the roses, red as her lover's
desire!

Lift up the lute and the lyre!

White let the roses be, white as her breast is
that trembles,

That sinks and sobs with the cymbals,
White as its fire!



THE LANTERN

Love went laughing by the house
With a lantern in his hand . .
From a round of gay carouse
Out I peered to see him pass,
Caught a flicker on the glass,
And I asked a laughing lass
(One I thought might understand)
Who it was went by the house
With a lantern in his hand.

So we tumbled out, we two,
And we followed far and steep,—
Until neither of us knew,
When the birds awoke from sleep
And the sky was turning blue,
If it merely were the peep
Of a star across the land,
Or a willow-wisp, with pass
Of his wand the way he flew.

But he waited in the dew,
Waited laughing for us two,
While I helped the little lass;
And we followed him anew

AN ODE TO HARVARD

With a joyful faint halloo!

Then he told us what we knew,
(O that joyful little lass!)

And we saw his eyes grow deep,
And we knew our love was true.

So when now the flashes pass—

How our two hearts understand
Who is watching by the house
With a lantern in his hand!

A BALLAD OF LIFE

Smiling he spoke when the dead would ride
To the roll of martial drum,—
*'For soldiers who have bled and died,
The end is nobly come!'*

So now are the drums declaring him
Advanced among the dead,
And slow are the axles bearing him
With shattered arm and head.

And his hand that has held a woman's face
In passion or in grief,
Shall soon in less and less of space
Be withered like a leaf.

And his heart that with hope or with battle-
cry
Has beat like a bell elate,
Shall soon with the dung of cattle lie,
To nourish birds that mate.

*'When soldiers fall as they soldierly fought,
The end is nobly come,'—*

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Was what he would say when the dead were
brought
With a toll of martial drum.

Yet even the common staring thief
Who yonder droops and swings,
He also shall change his hand to a leaf,
His heart to a bird that sings!

MARIA SPIRIDONOVA

. . . "To suppress agarian disorders due to famine, the Vice-Governor, M. Luzhenovsky, went through Tambov and began to shoot the peasants wholesale and flog them in the most atrocious manner. As he was returning from one of his expeditions, a girl named Maria Spiridonova shot him. She tried to shoot herself, but was disarmed by a blow and fell to the ground."—Prince Kropotkin, *The New York Times*, September 9, 1906.

They are damning you for murder,
For you shot a murderer dead;
They have stripped you and have whipped you
With their leather and their lead,
Till your blinded face and body
Were as one great wound that bled.

Mary Martyr, when they formed you
Haloed out of whip and rod,
When they bade you name what comrade
Helped you make a man a clod—
Who was with you in your courage,—
Did you tell them it was God?

Mary Martyr, though they bruised you,
Though your body's blood they shed,
Yet your body was His vengeance;
And, arisen from the dead,

AN ODE TO HARVARD

Close to God your soul shall trample
This new serpent on the head!

For you knew, in spite of churches,
He shall surely come again;
And you broke the sixth commandment
That was only one of ten,
But you kept the great commandment:
'Thou shalt love thy fellow-men'!

GAMBETTA TO HIS MIGNONNE

My promise and your sacrifice to prove,
You came with tenderness, you came with
strength;

You were my battle-cry, you were my tent,
My hand, my helm, my whole accoutrement;
And no desire now tempts me—till at length
You shall have been my uttermost content
In death—save that I may not lose your love!

How I declared that I as deep should prove
Passion's devotion, patriotism's will!—

You and my country were to share my art,
And each of you should have an equal part!

Say is that dedication equal still,
When no desire can enter in my heart

At last, save that I may not lose your love?

All that I have and am, but kneels to prove
Your inspiration, O adored soul!

Of your own strength have I brought back
again,

Out of the restlessness and mortal pain,

The tender mystery that is the whole

Of life, and other thoughts are all as vain

As dust!—save that I may not lose your love!

SIN

I drew to thee, but more withstood
Lest heart to heart should beat,
For Heaven had had me christened good
And would not let us meet.

And so I held from thee and fled
And kept my body pure
That long shall lie and moulder dead,
Letting my soul endure.

Yet shall that soul, so utterly
Thine in immortal sin,
Outside of Heaven better be
With thee, than lone within.

THE WITCHES

Once we were women of song and caresses
Whose days were the threads of a purple design,
Whose gods were the power that passion confesses
To moonlight and heart-beats, to music and wine;
The pandering moon went ahead in the chase,
And music impelled us with flagellant stresses;
And many a passionate, wine-stricken face
Has kissed and gone mad in the maze of our tresses!

Then we knew us accursed —and to wailing and kneeling
We fell in our panic;—but life dried away
And crevices crept among wrinkles, revealing
The ashes that altered us crispèd and gray;
Till our only lust left is for darkness and flame,
In the hushes and hisses of storm to go stealing,
And, full of abhorrent and hungering shame,
Amid odours of death to be leaping and reeling!

AN ODE TO HARVARD

O the horrors we fling to the night-wind that
chases!

The flesh we desire in the vapour that floats!

O dizzy we are with the smoke in our faces,

The flame in our eyes and the fume in our
throats!—

With what cunning we dig! . . . with what fury
of care

We uncover the bones that we break with
embraces!—

And fondlingly loosen the greenish-gray hair . . .

And loop it on branches in desolate places!

THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH

I

I was my merry self just now;—
But on the instant that I turned my head,
The ancestral flesh darted alive within me,
Like a wolf.

It was strange to me and terrified me,
It was rank of times and places unknown to me,
And yet it was most sweetly urging in me,
In every pulse and vein of me,
Coaxing like the plea of an old friend,
That I turn and be again at last
The ancient savage self!

We leaped arm in arm!—
We became one being, savage and exalted!

We set fire to all the cities,
We overturned the mountains,
And even while we stood motionless in one high
spot
We ran like a wind round the world
And returned in effrontery before the stars.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

We were full of all the fruits of the earth,
Almonds and apples, pineapples and grapes,
Of all the fountains both of milk and honey,
Of all the flaming feathers and the sharp melodious beaks,
Of all the hoofs and shrill neighings,
Of all the volcanoes,
Of the stillness of the moon and the confusion of great clouds,
Of the kissing of the sun on the shade,
And of the sea on the shore,
And of the sword in the body,
And of the dew on the feet.

II

Exultant there stood a figure on the edge of a cliff,
Leaning and twining its fingers against the sky,
And the hair was as a water-fall at noon,
The body as a pillar of spray,
And through it lay the curving breast, like white rain-bows,
And the ribs of curving ivory were bound as in soft silk,
And the heart was beating in its place;
And the fingers that were against the sky

AND OTHER POEMS

Were drawing me like a gleaming net,
And the mouth, that tiny red dawn,
Was calling to me,
Like the sight of land, and like the sound of
 sea!

Straight to the cliff,
My hand an arrow-point,
My foot the tip,
Straight to the toppling edge,
I was borne on the wind,
Caught round in a whirlwind,
In a whirl of spice.

And on the edge,
For one tall crumbling moment,
We stood in effrontery before the stars.

III

Then was the steepness, where we fell, like a
 sword on the lips,
The pang of destruction,
And the base was an army of spears.

The pebbles of the shore were as flies in my
 wounds,
And the sea threw salt.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

The rough tongue of the sun was an abomination in my wounds;
And I beheld the body that had stood upon the cliff
Torn and sucked outward by a wave,
The head bent under, and the open breasts
Gone in the sea
Like evil bloodshot eyes,
The feet like weeds.

IV

But in the end came the cool firmament,
The multitude of stars,
And I stood propitiatory before them,
I lifted my hand, I stoned the ancestral wolf;
And the witnesses that had been created before
me
Looked not away;
And I ran like a voice round the earth,
And returned like a voice from the invisible
corners of the earth,
And sang with the stars,—
Before the mountain of darkness,
Before the foot of silence!

‘AND O THE WIND’

’Twas such a saucy little brook
And had so beckoning a look
 And had a wink so sly,
That oft I follow’d where it led,
 Caught by its roguish eye,
Caught by the dimpling laugh that sped
Ever ahead, ever ahead,
 Amid the grasses growing;—
And O the wind was blowing,
And O the wind was high!

It seemed that I must chase and chase
Forever at a charmèd pace
 Among the parting grasses:
Forever taunted by a sound
 Of laughing-voicèd lasses
Whom never any mortal found;
While all around and all around
 Green grasses should be growing,
 And dreams be misty blowing
 As a peril when it passes.

AN ODE TO HARVARD

The wind is fled I know not where,
And leaves a deadness in the air
 And rain along the sky.
Where am I going?—why should I run
 Upon these muddy flats that lie
In squalor toward a setting sun?
Can this same pathway have begun
 Where there were grasses growing?—
 And O the wind was blowing,
 And O the wind was high!

ROVERS ALL

O body made of breezes
From fields of early May,—
The bee that roves and seizes
The summer's soul away
And stores it where he pleases,
Remembers where you lay—
He reeled from where you lay,
And roving birds and breezes
Went dizzier that day.

Though I, a wanton rover,
Have wandered where you lay,
Yet now when May is over
And clover now is hay,
The wanton worm's the rover
That finds your lips today,
That kisses you today,
The buccaneering lover
That steals your heart away!

O ecstasies! O eases!
O dizzy night! O day!—
The worm that roves and seizes
The summer's soul away

AN ODE TO HARVARD

And stores it where he pleases,
Remembers where you lay,
Has kissed you where you lay!—
O body made of breezes,
O body made of May!

‘OVER THE HILLS’ . . .

Over the hills to climb and flee,
And let no heart be braver!
And when they arise like waves of the sea
O like a bird of the sea to be,—
Over the hills forever!

Over the hills to find content,
To lose the gall and sorrow
Of letting life and love be spent
For happiness that came and went,
Or may not come to-morrow!

Over the hills hide half-unknown
High haunts of starry cover;
O to steal out in the night, alone
With one close-clasp'd whose hair is blown,—
And be the perfect lover!

Over the hills at last to know
The soul of some deep river!—
And sweet in the fields to rest and grow,
And swift in the winds to rise and blow—
Over the hills forever!

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